

## **The Blessing Box**

**Written by Lloyd Brinson of St. Luke's, Currituck**

St. Luke's of Currituck is a young church located on the heavily traveled Caratoke Highway that connects northern tourists to the Outer Banks. In 2017, several of our parishioners wondered if there may be families in need of food and other necessities when it's not practical or possible to go to the county's more formal, staffed food pantries. They built a small, simple wooden mini pantry at the edge of the church parking lot and began our Blessing Box Ministry.

The Blessing Box is open 24 hours a day, unattended, no questions asked, with basic, nonperishable food items, toiletries, personal hygiene items, baby food and pet food to help those in need get through an emergency. It's designed to keep a family in basic supplies until they can get longer-term help.

"Take what you need; leave what you can," is the motto and people in the greater community help church members keep it going. Occasionally, the church holds food drives. Other times, neighbors give bags of food to church members or stop by the parking lot and fill the box themselves. Church members regularly monitor the box, make sure it offers a variety of food and supplies, and move any extra inside the church kitchen as reserves.

Sometimes people take more than they need, we realize. But day in and day out, we believe we're doing important work that helps those in need. Over the years, we've had people tell us how the Blessing Box helped them through a crisis. We've had people donate because, now that they are better off, they want to give back. And we've been touched by how fellow parishioners and people in the wider community are moved to support our mission.

There now several other Blessing Boxes in Currituck County and all are being heavily used, especially in light of the COVID-19 crisis. We began putting face masks in the Blessing Box after we received the shipment that the diocese arranged. They disappear with everything else.

That simple wooden box blesses all of us, in many ways.